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REMARKS, &c.

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LETTER I.

DEAR SIR,

YESTERDAY evening a perſon, but who, or by whoſe order I have not been able to learn, left at my houſe, covered and directed for me, a pamphlet, which I found entitled, "An authentic Narrative of ſome particular Occurrences which have lately taken place among a Denomination of Diſſenters in the County of Devon; communicated in Six Letters to a Miniſter in London."

Having heard of ſome diſagreement between the Baptiſts at Plymouth and Dock, but knowing next to nothing of the circumſtances of the diſagreement, I ſoon read the pamphlet through, and

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can truly ſay I was much concerned both on account of the *occaſion* of its being written, and the *manner* in which it was written, but above all, that after writing and printing it ſhould be *publiſhed*.

As you are the only perſon, either at Plymouth or Dock, with whom I ever exchanged a letter, I ſoon formed the deſign of writing a line to you upon the ſubject of the pamphlet I had juſt received and was then reading.

After reading it through, I determined to publiſh a few remarks upon it, and addreſs them to you. Upon this information you may naturally be ſuppoſed to aſk me the following queſtions:

Why ſhould you, who, by your own confeſſion, know next to nothing of the ſubject contained in the narrative, trouble yourſelf about it? or can you be ſuppoſed to write ſuitable remarks upon it?

Will not the *publication* of your remarks have a tendency to make the ſubject of the narrative *more publick* than it is already, on account of which you have expreſſed ſo much concern?

To your firſt queſtion, I reply, That I am not undertaking the cauſe of either ſide. Let which will be wrong, the narrator appears to me to be far, very far, from being right. Nothing is more general than for people to attend eagerly to what is ſaid in a diſpute on the ſide which they take, and on the contrary, to diſregard the ſpeaker or writer on the other ſide of the queſtion. Obſerving this to prevail in the diſpute upon Baptiſm, I have frequently from the pulpit recommended it to thoſe, who with me do not believe in Pedobaptiſm,

tiſm, to attend the ceremony where it is practiſed and take their bibles with them, to turn down the chapters and verſes upon which the ordinance, ſo adminiſtered, is founded. Such a line of conduct purſued, reſpecting controverted points in general, though it may at firſt unhinge the minds of moſt, would afterwards have a happy tendency to convince ſome wherein they were wrong—to confirm others upon better evidence wherein they were right, and incline all to judge more favourably of thoſe who differ from them.

Knowing ſo little of the unhappy difference between the churches at Plymouth and Dock, it is impoſſible for me to become the apologiſt of either, unleſs indirectly, by pointing out the improper conduct of the writer of the narrative. I hope the recollection of this will ſecure the remarks I am about to make an *imparital* conſideration; and if ſo, I doubt not but the narrator will appear to be *a ſower of diſcord among brethren*———a man who, if things are not as *he would have them*, and in *the way* he would have them, will widen and perpetuate breaches rather than attempt to heal them, or even ſtand ſilent by, for the gentle hand of time to apply the remedy.

Should the *partiality* of the narrative be made to appear by one, who has almoſt no knowledge of the ſubject but what he derives from that narrative, it is poſſible, that even thoſe on the ſide of the queſtion he has taken may turn upon him and ſay, "Out of thine own mouth (or from thine

own pen) art thou judged thou wicked ſervant." In ſuch a caſe, the baneful influence of his narrative would be prevented from ſpreading, by which means the end of my writing would be fully attained.

To your laſt queſtion, I anſwer, That theſe remarks ſhall not be publiſhed where the narrative has not been publiſhed. Conſequently they will not be likely to fall into the hands of many who have not read the narrative, nor are likely to read it.

Should they be the means of ſpreading the ſcandal in ſome meaſure, I have only to ſay, Did it not appear to me probable that the good produced by them would be greater than the evil, by which means good would prevail on the whole, I would immediately throw down my pen and proceed no farther; nor will I proceed till I have given the conſequence another thought, but at preſent remain

June 29, 1790. Yours, &c.

LETTER II.

DEAR SIR,

THIS paper reaching your hands will convince you what the reſult of my thoughts is upon the ſubject with which I concluded my foregoing letter.

Though the acquaintance between you and me has never been very intimate, yet of ſome ſtanding; and having conſidered you a diffident, diſpaſſionate man, I am induced to addreſs theſe letters to you, hoping you will uſe your endeavors to promote their general deſign.

With you, when in town, laſt ſummer, I had more converſation about affairs at Plymouth and Dock, than with any other, or all others put together upon the ſame ſubject; yet, from that converſation, I cannot recollect that you diſcovered on which ſide of the queſtion you then were; therefore I venture to conſider myſelf writing to a perſon totally unbiaſſed, and free from prejudice; not that I take upon me to ſay poſitively that you did not diſcover yourſelf to incline to one ſide more than another; for the truth

is,

is, I remember very little of what was then ſaid. I ſhall therefore offer to your candid conſideration a few thoughts upon the narrative, or rather upon the Author, and what he has advanced under that *title*.

The firſt thing worthy of notice, in the publication, is the Author's *motive* declared in the advertiſement, *viz.* " *Self preſervation*, in juſtifying himſelf from falſe charges:" That it is right, and in many caſes a man's duty to juſtify himſelf from falſe charges, reaſon and ſcripture abundantly teſtify; but, ſhould a Reader of the narrative enquire what theſe falſe charges were, he muſt go elſewhere for an anſwer, or wait for a ſecond publication; for, in attempting to juſtify himſelf, the Narrator does little more than *criminate* or *recriminate* others; the latter of which, he tells us, " he does not wiſh to do."

In reading the Pamphlet, I have aſked myſelf, what could induce the Author to *publiſh* theſe Letters? If falſe charges were brought againſt him, would it not have been ſufficient to ſtate them, and write out a refutation of them, which, in complicated circumſtances, may be neceſſary for the information of even thoſe who have been perſonally concerned, owing to the vaſt difference that is made in a ſubject by the omiſſion of ſome parts of it, or even the tranſpoſing of ſome parts? The Author might have done ſo, and handed the M. S. to thoſe concerned, without *telling it in Gath, and publiſhing it in the ſtreets of Aſkelon.*

But

But we are informed, "the letters appear in print with the approbation of the miniſter for whoſe information they were wrote, and by whom they were returned for that purpoſe." Being in habits of intimacy with all the particular Baptiſt miniſters ſettled in London, I can ſcarcely think any one of them would give the ſmalleſt encouragement to ſuch a publication; but have conſulted the honour of religion at large, rather than the wanton reſentment of ſuch a writer. Yet it may be a miniſter of another denomination; or it may be a young miniſter not ſettled anywhere. Should it be the latter, it will not be much to the credit of the Narrator, who has dealt ſo liberally in his abuſe of miniſters in *general* and of *young* miniſters in particular. See pages 6, 10, 31, 32; and that he conſiders miniſters in general, to be *worthleſs characters*, appears from his intimating, p. 6, that thoſe who are not ſo, are only "exceptions from a general rule."

The obſervation made by many, p. 6, at leaſt in your connection, can only be founded upon that principle of the church of Rome, that *ignorance is the mother of devotion*; for whatever will cauſe devotedneſs to God, will alſo produce eſteem to the miniſters of Chriſt; but the ignorance of many prompts them to look for more in profeſſors in general, and miniſters in particular, than they ought to expect, or would expect, if they ſufficiently knew the plague of their own hearts. Therefore, when "good men obſerve, the leſs they are acquainted with miniſters in private,

vate, the more they eſteem them in their public capacity," I take it for granted, either that ſuch miniſters are unworthy of their eſteem, or, that the eſteem of ſuch "good men" is not worth having.

The execration of prieſts and prieſtcraft, in the connection where it ſtands, indicates a ſpirit of bitterneſs againſt the generality of our miniſters. The writer, as he appears to be a member of your church, muſt know, that the conſtitution of our churches effectually provides againſt every degree of tyranny and oppreſſion in their miniſters. To ſay, "though diſarmed of the power, their inclination is the ſame," is only to ſay, "Human nature is the ſame in all ages of the world."

"All general reflections," ſays a celebrated writer, "upon nations, ſocieties and profeſſions of men, are the trite thread-bare jokes of thoſe who ſet up for wit without having any. Judge of individuals from your own knowledge of them, and not from their ſex, profeſſion or denomination." Taking this rule, and judging from the narrative before me, as far as it may be admitted in evidence, it appears to me highly probable, that, upon a change of circumſtances, the writer would make as tyrannizing and oppreſſive a prieſt as ever wore the mitre.

I am far from pleading for the purity of our miniſters, as if it generally raiſed them ſuperior to the temptations peculiar to their ſtations. They read to their people an apoſtolic exhortation,

"*Obey*

"*Obey them that have the rule over you;*" and obſerving that the New Teſtament always applies *ruling* in the church, to thoſe and thoſe only who ſuſtain the office of Overſeers, Elders or Paſtors; and never to Deacons or any other officer in the church; they think their relation to Chriſt, and to the people who have called them to the paſtoral office, obliges them to exerciſe ſome degree of authority in the church *over which they have the rule.*——"The church over which they have the rule!" Theſe words muſt grate upon the ear of our Narrator. We will, if you pleaſe, refer the matter to him; and perhaps, in his next "*ſeries of letters,*" he will be able to inform us that the preſent reading is a *miſtranſlation* or an *interpolation.* Either will do. However, the generality of our miniſters, not deeply verſed in biblical criticiſm, take the words according to the vulgar reading; and, in the exerciſe of the authority belonging to their office, may ſometimes diſcover a ſpirit of vanity, inſolence or temerity, and eſpecially when they are young. At this, no obſerver of mankind will wonder. Raiſed, oftentimes from a ſtate of obſcurity, as our churches regard grace and gifts more than family and education, raiſed, and ſometimes when young, to the exerciſe of the firſt office in the church of Chriſt, ſubject at the ſame time to all the imperfections of human nature, it would be wonderful indeed if they were perfectly free from the above infirmities. Nor, on this account, will any conſiderate man be violently offended with the order

of the Goſpel which Jeſus Chriſt has inſtituted. If the demon of pride and haughtineſs take poſſeſſion of our young paſtor, in the covenant of grace proviſion is made for the expulſion of the evil ſpirit; and in order to accompliſh it, many of the good people of God are themſelves by no means backward in coming *to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord againſt the mighty.*

Near ten years ago, the late worthy paſtor of the church, of which you were then a member, was afflicted with a diſeaſe which iſſued in his death. Prior to this event, which was expected, the church agreed to ſend for a young man whom they had called to the work of the miniſtry, was at that time at a diſtance, and was not ſettled with any other people, but ſtill continued a member with them. Upon this, your then paſtor, who you know was a ſagacious obſerver of men and things, remarked to a friend, "They have ſent for *******, and they will make his heart ake." The world has ſeen the obſervation verified.

If this ill-natured writer had been poſſeſſed of a very ſmall degree of candour and common ſenſe, among his many digreſſions, he would have given ſome intimation that miniſters are not the only perſons in our churches who exerciſe craft, and aim at tyranny and oppreſſion.

From thoſe of our members poſſeſſed of ſome wealth, Deacons are generally choſen by the reſt of the members at large. Called to an office, and feeling their importance, theſe good men are expoſed to temptation as well as their paſtor.

Leaving

Leaving the church at Plymouth and Dock totally out of ſight, as I know ſo little of it, if you and I look at thoſe churches that have been divided, that have been torn to pieces and made a reproach to the whole world, if I were to imitate the ſpiteful manner of the writer of the narrative, it would be by ſaying, I am of opinion, we ſhould ſee theſe things originate more frequently in Deacon-craft than in Prieſt-craft.

That wealthy members ſhould be thought too lightly of, either by miniſters or the church in general, there is no great danger. They are often the chief means of the miniſter's ſupport, and conſequently of continuing the Goſpel among the people, but in this, as in all other human affairs, that from which we expect our greateſt happineſs, is frequently found to be the ſource of our greateſt miſery. This ſubject is ſo exactly delineated by a maſterly hand, that I cannot refrain from giving you a copy of it in this connection.

"It is a melancholy conſideration, that no ſooner is a church gathered, than up ſprings ſome proud and petulant *Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence*, diſcouraging ſome, rejecting others, aſſuming a right of directing all, (3 Ep. John 9, 10.) and becoming, through the honeſt inattention of the harmleſs brethren, the patron of the living, the bible of the miniſter, and in the end the wolf of the flock, the ruin of the church. Nothing degrades a miniſter more than a mean ſubmiſſion to ſuch a contemptible ſavage, who not unfrequently rules him, poor man! with

a rod of iron. What renders theſe animals *moſt* deſpicable is, their total want, in general, of every qualification neceſſary to direct a flock. Groſs ignorance, violent tempers, ill manners, a little grimace on Sundays, and ten years ſucceſs in trade, make one of theſe monſters. He is a *Lord Brother* at *home*, and worſe than a *Lord Biſhop* at a *diſtance*. Our churches have greater advantages than others in this caſe. For, 1. We have none of theſe maſters till we ourſelves create them. 2, If our folly give them exiſtence, they have no civil power over us. 3, We can unmake, and annihilate them, juſt when we pleaſe. Or, 4, If the miniſter fear, as he has ſometimes, through various connections, reaſon to fear, that to unhorſe Diotrephes would be to give his good wife, or children, or friends a fall; (I refer to Gen. 49, 17.) if he cannot pluck up ſuch a tare without plucking up wheat alſo, and ſo doing more harm than good (Matt. 13, 29.) he may preſerve his own perſonal freedom by a juſt inattention to ſuch a tyrant, and by ſetting his people an example of love of liberty. Or, 5, He may give up his charge, and depart, as many of the beſt of men have been driven to do. In theſe little tyrants the proverb is fulfilled, religion brings forth wealth or power, and the daughter devours the mother." Robinſon's Claude, vol. 2. p. 161.

Some features in this portrait bear a ſtrong reſemblance to ſome that appear in the writer of the narrative. He aſſumes a right of directing—the manner

in which ſinging ſhould be conducted in public worſhip (p. 36—38.)——what ſhould be the motives of thoſe who educate their ſons for the miniſtry——how young men ſhould enter upon that important work (p. 31.)——what appears moſt amiable in them (p. 10.)—and what are the beſt books to prepare a miniſter for the pulpit (p. 26.) Yet this is the man whoſe "grimace" induces him to ſpeak of his very moderate abilities to appear at the bar of the public—and being too well acquainted with his own inſufficiency to aſpire to be an author." (Adv.) That he would rule his miniſter with a rod of iron appears from his great care that he might not obtain too much power (p. 21.)—and though none are to be frowned upon who contribute to his ſupport, he is yet highly culpable for fawning in the face of power, ſo that our author's opinion is to be the rule of his miniſter's conduct. *Diotrephes avaunt!*

The general ſuſpicions and general cenſures, ſo plentifully ſtrewed up and down the narrative do no credit either to the head or the heart of the writer. "It was natural to ſuppoſe, that a young miniſter when he could graſp the moſt thriving part of the intereſt, and thereby have a church wholly to himſelf, would let no opportunity ſlip." (p. 10.) It was *natural* to ſuppoſe this, was it? I will only ſay, *Judge not, that ye be not judged.* Again, "Alas! could we know how many are apparently honeſt through the terrors of juſtice, we ſhould be aſtoniſhed at their numbers." (p. 15.) A truly virtuous man looks upon all with whom he

he has perſonal tranſactions to be honeſt, till he find them the contrary. Inſtead of dealing with an honeſt man as if he were a rogue, he will deal with rogues as if they were honeſt men. Prudently providing againſt the incidents of human life and the real infirmities of human nature, he will give and take memorandums, bills, bonds, receipts, &c. which will effectually ſecure him againſt the unexpected villainy of an unprincipled individual. There is a happy medium between fooliſh credulity, and that prevailing ſuſpicion which a vicious mind naturally generates.

Having dealt a few ſevere ſtrokes upon "ſome good people's conduct in educating their ſons for the miniſtry," becauſe it is only "*ſometimes* their motives are the moſt pure." p. 31, our author gravely reprimands "the froth and vain conceit which often characterizes thoſe juſt come from the academy." p. 32. *Hear him*, ye academics! And then intimating. "How pleaſant it is to fiſh in troubled waters, p. 33. he tells the world of a ſeparation in another church, and adds "its merits I have endeavoured to inveſtigate." *Diotrephes thou ſtandeſt ſelf convicted as a* BUSY-BODY *and a* TALE-BEARER!

After publiſhing the weakneſs or the wickedneſs of individuals, p. 32, 33, and what he conſiders the treachery of another body of religious profeſſors, over which things a pious ſoul would rather weep and mourn in ſecret, our cenſor proceeds to "reprehend" and "condemn," thoſe Diſſenters who wear epiſcopal habits as though they were none of them. "Diſſenters upon principle."

principle," p. 35. Forgetting, or perhaps not knowing, that the objection of Hooper and others, was not ſo much againſt the habits themſelves, as the *impoſition* of them. Moſt of the ejected divines continued to wear them after their ejection. When our author has inveighed through two or three pages againſt the manner of ſinging in ſome congregations he cannot conclude his letter without again "lamenting over the few there are among us of miniſters or *people*, who diſſent on principle," p. 38. In the name of common ſenſe, what impediment is there to prevent private people among the Diſſenters going over to the Church? Why are they at the expence of ſupporting the Diſſenting intereſt? Why do they make themſelves in moſt places *ſingular*, and in ſome places *odious*, by their diſſent? *Diotrephes, take the beam out of thine own eye*, for thou ſeemeſt to have loſt ſight of the "narrative."

Diſguſted with the inuendos and exclamations, ſuſpicions and cenſures, ſeveral more of which I had marked with a deſign to notice, I throw the book from me with a *get thee behind me ſatan* for I have to preach twice next Lord's day, therefore *depart*.

Till next week I muſt beg leave to remain as before,

July 1, 1790. Yours, &c.

LET-

LETTER III.

DEAR SIR,

FROM the hearth where it has lain, ſince the date of my laſt, I have juſt taken the book which the author calls "an authentic narrative, &c." Inſtead of which, as names and titles are more perfect, as they are the more deſcriptive of perſons or things, it ſhould have been entitled, "*a book of univerſal calumny, &c.*

Having wearied himſelf in hunting after ſubjects of general ſlander, the writer returns to, what may indeed be connected with the narrative, yet is no part of the narrative itſelf, but his weighty objections againſt Miniſters being concerned in trade.

Though the apoſtle tells Timothy, 2 Ep. ii. 4. "No man that warreth entangleth himſelf with the affairs of this life," yet our dictator himſelf admits that, "it is not only lawful, but highly commendable for miniſters to go into buſineſs when it is not in the power of the people to allow them a ſufficient maintenence." p. 21. Then it ſeems, notwithſtanding what the apoſtle hath ſaid, that

that the thing is not in itſelf unlawful, but in certain caſes inexpedient, yet in other circumſtances it may be highly expedient, but when it is ſo, and is allowed to be ſo, the poor miniſter is expoſed to all the frightful conſequences, that the gloomy imagination of our narrator can poſſibly ſuppoſe.

I believe few miniſters would *prefer* being engaged in buſineſs without circumſtances concurring to point out the *expediency*. I perſuade myſelf the number is very ſmall indeed, who are influenced by the motives inſinuated by our author. I will ſay, Thoſe who are ſo, *are not far from the worſt of men:* and indeed that the generality of them are ſuch, is more than intimated through the courſe of the narrative. If I miſtake not, this writer's pen is a two-edged ſword, with which he endeavours to wound the reputation not only of his junior, but that of his ſenior paſtor alſo, when he ſays, "The few miniſters I have known to follow buſineſs have *all* proved lively arguments againſt the practice, &c." (p. 43.) But if *all* theſe lively arguments ſhould turn out upon enquiry as I am apprehenſive that will, which he calls a "ſtriking proof," that "very lately happened in London," they will be found to be altogether defamation founded on falſehood.

It is very improbable that "diſſention and ſeparation" ſhould very lately take place in a church in London, on account of the miniſter's being engaged in buſineſs, and the affair not be pretty ge-

nerally known. I have heard of no ſuch thing. Of the particular Baptiſt Churches in London, three of their miniſters are concerned in buſineſs. In one of theſe churches there has been a "diſſention," though no "ſeperation," which I ſuppoſe muſt be the caſe referred to, and to which caſe I can ſpeak with certainty as far as the miniſter is concerned.

The Deacons, inſtead of "requeſting their miniſter either to reſign his paſtoral office, or give up his buſineſs," on the contrary, conceive themſelves to be ill uſed, for any one to ſay, they ſo much as *deſired* him to reſign his office, and he poſſitively aſſerts that he never heard any one of them utter a ſingle ſyllable in a way of diſapprobation, of the ſmall concern he had in buſineſs, nor indeed was there the leaſt ſhadow of reaſon for them to do ſo.

The buſineſs itſelf was ſmall, and all he had to do with it would not upon an average take him more than two, or perhaps three hours in a week. It was not ſought after by him, but offered itſelf through the death of one of the members of his church, and the repeated diſappointment of the widow in diſpoſing of the buſineſs, after which it was propoſed to one with whom the miniſter had been in habits of intimacy from his childhood, but as he either could not or would not undertake it himſelf, unleſs the other would be in ſome meaſure concerned, and as it was a buſineſs in which no great riſk was likely to be run, he conſented on certain conditions, which I am credibly informed

formed was expreſſed fully to the following purport. "I will not engage, unleſs you and your friends upon due conſideration *wiſh* me to do ſo, nor will I *ſo* engage in any buſineſs as to divert my attention from the grand object to which my life *ought* to be devoted." This condition was ſtrictly adhered to, and full four years elapſed before any diſſention broke out in the church. When it did, no one pretended to take the leaſt umbrage at the trifling concern the miniſter had in buſineſs. His name was not in it. He has never obtruded himſelf upon his friends to ſolicit their favours: and though after all expences, &c. of the buſineſs were diſcharged he was entitled to half the profits, he declares upon the cloſeſt examination of his own heart, that he is a total ſtranger to what that member of your church impudently aſſerts in the paper he read at the church-meeting, as copied in p. 25 of the narrative, that "the cuſtom of the people is made the ſtandard of their love and affection to their miniſter in trade, and however *candid and generous minded* he may be, it is not *poſſible* for the human mind ſo to diveſt itſelf, but he muſt retain a partiality for thoſe who are his cuſtomers." I know the anſwer already made to ſuch a declaration by this "LORD BROTHER" to ſuch an one. "I could not ſay, *He hath no ſin*, but rather that he evidences little knowledge of his own heart." (p. 46.) The truth is, thoſe whoſe hearts are the worſt, *generally* ſuſpect every bodies' more than their own.

That "the heart is deceitful above all things," is a certain fact confirmed by the authority of divine inſpiration, and when our fellow creatures are the ſubjects of immediate concern, our hearts deceive us chiefly, either in the *matter* of duty, the *meaſure* of duty, or the *motives* to duty, but when the proportionate quantum of eſteem be the ſubject of enquiry, and whether that eſteem increaſes or diminiſhes towards particular individuals the heart is a good caſuiſt and ſeldom or never deceives an honeſt mind.

Now if I am right reſpecting the church referred to in London, and I think it ſcarcely poſſible to be any other, what can be ſaid reſpecting the falſe aſſertion of the conduct of the Deacons to their Miniſter, eſpecially conſidering the *diſtinct* and *particular* reaſons given for it—"becauſe buſineſs divided his affections, diverted his attention, and deſtroyed his uſefulneſs." He challenges any one to produce evidence of the two firſt, nor has any one attempted to do it through the courſe of eighteen or twenty months, ſince the diſſention firſt appeared. If *they* cannot be eſtabliſhed, the *laſt* cannot be proved. Nor was a want of uſefulneſs the plea ſet up for the ground of this diſſention, for reckoning back from the time when that began to the time when the firſt perſon was received a member into the church by that miniſter, it will be a period of ſeven years and four or five months, during which time he received into the church ſixty-four members; nor was it ſo much as *pretended* that his preaching was leſs ſpiritual,

leſs

leſs evangelical, or in any reſpect leſs calculated for uſefulneſs. Upon the whole, at this day, to ſeveral of the members themſelves, to ſome miniſters, who *by deſire* have heard the whole of the affair, to many others who have accidentally heard all that can be ſaid about it, the diſſention appears a moſt ſingular and unaccountable piece of buſineſs, well expreſſed by a miniſter at a diſtance, who hearing of it, ſays in a letter to a friend, "It is to me a myſterious revolution. No charge of heteredoxy, much leſs of immorality, no quarrel, no perſonal pique, and yet part with a miniſter they knew from his youth, and whoſe abilities they cannot think leſſened, of whom they once approved, and under whom many have been added to the church, is *truly aſtoniſhing!*"

However, the ſeperation has not yet taken place, nor did thoſe who were at firſt the moſt ſanguine for it, think, upon examination, that there was ſufficient cauſe for it. But if this be the caſe, how muſt it mortify the pride of our narrator, who ſays "he is proud to declare thoſe as his ſentiments, after ſuch an example." (p. 43.) Yet if his *pride* be mortified, perhaps his *vanity* may receive ample compenſation, for if he be proud to *follow* them, it will be a ſtill greater gratification *to go before* them, for you know "*Diotrephes loveth to have the pre-eminence.*"

The lawfulneſs of miniſters engaging in buſineſs being admitted: People in that, as in all other things, will differ much in their judgment reſpecting the *expediency* or *inexpediency* of the ſame

ſame caſe. When it is not manifeſtly the latter, all the reaſons and ſuppoſable caſes, which this Prieſt-driver (for he'll take care not to be prieſt-ridden) apprehends to be ſo weighty, will by an unprejudiced perſon be eſteemed no more than the ſmall duſt of the balance. Nor would a "volume" of ſuch reaſons, as nothing is eaſier than to write a "volume" of nonſenſe; but a "volume" of ſuch reaſons, would *prove* nothing againſt the practice, nor produce conviction in a thinking mind.

As to your church "ſuffering in its reſpectability with neighbouring churches, on account of your junior miniſter being in trade," it is ſo forcibly contradicted in fact, that I almoſt wonder, if I could wonder at any thing in him, that this man could ſtand up at your church-meeting, and aſſert that, with other things of the ſame kind, and then publiſh them to the world. (p. 25, 26.) Have "neighbouring churches, occaſional hearers, and the world at large," had low and contemptible ideas of your ſenior paſtor? Have they ſo conſidered the aged and venerable paſtor of a church in your connection on the borders of a neighbouring county, a man of God, who with honour and uſefulneſs, in the ſervice of Chriſt and his church, has borne the heat and burden of the DAY? I trow not.

This general calumniator has accurately drawn his own picture in giving the character of young men, page 10. "Perhaps this, of all other ages of the world," ſays he, "may ſtand firſt upon record

cord for the unteachableneſs of young men, the violence of their tempers, their confidence and temerity before their elders; with a vain ſuppoſition of their own underſtanding, gifts and attainments." *Diotrephes, thou art the man*, whether young or old.

Your laſt aſſociation letter lies before me. Among the churches there enumerated, ſeveral of their miniſters are engaged in buſineſs; but I never heard of the churches ſuffering in their reſpectability on that account; nor of "people, in general, having very low and contemptible ideas" of thoſe miniſters.

It is very curious to ſee this declaimer againſt thoſe who, he *ſuſpects*, do not diſſent upon principle from the national eſtabliſhment, go to that very eſtabliſhment, and others like it, to ſupport, what he calls, his "*doctrine*," p. 39. If he himſelf diſſent, upon principle, he muſt know, that national eſtabliſhments are worldly eſtabliſhments, founded upon worldly maxims. But I recollect myſelf, theſe are the avowed data of his reaſoning, p. 40. "Was the phyſician or attorney to keep ſhop, and call it their wife's buſineſs, would they ſuffer any the leſs in their reputation for ſuch a pretence?" Then the truth ſeems to be, that Diotrephes wiſhes to ſee his miniſter appear as much as poſſible like the parſon of the pariſh, only he muſt not wear a gown, and perhaps not a band.

The practice of the funds, at leaſt of the Baptiſt fund, is far from being a caſe in point. That inſtitution

inſtitution is of a *charitable* nature; and thoſe who receive from it, though univerſally allowed to be the moſt deſerving and worthy men in the world, cannot pretend to ſet up a claim for what they receive, upon the ground of perſonal ſervice rendered, either to the former benefactors to that charity, or to the preſent contributors to it. The managers of that inſtitution therefore, do not ſo much conſider the circumſtances of the church, as they do the circumſtances of the miniſter who receives out of it, through the medium of the church. But the caſe is far otherwiſe with thoſe for whoſe ſervice a miniſter employs his time and talents, or even a portion of them. I fear there are ſome who, for want of duly conſidering the matter, agreeably to what this author ſeems to intimate, p. 6, look upon what "they contribute to the ſupport" of their miniſter, purely gratuitous, and not at all a matter of juſtice, and what common honeſty requires.

Though it would be impertinent to propoſe the queſtion to others, it would not be ſo to aſk this *pre-eminent* man, whether he thinks a "phyſician or attorney would be happy and ſatisfied to enjoy" no more than the ſalary given to the junior miniſter for the *whole* of their ſervice? Why ſhould the time and talents of a miniſter be thought of leſs *pecuniary* value than thoſe of a phyſician and attorney? If, indeed, the Lord's day is the *only* portion of time the miniſter employs his talents for the ſervice of the church, I agree with the clumſy wit of our author's friend, that

that " there is an impropriety in paying our brother tradeſman for preaching," becauſe, if otherwiſe, " he gets money every day, and (in the ſtrict ſenſe of the word) can hardly be ſaid to keep any ſabbath," p. 43. But if he appropriate a conſiderable part of his time for the benefit of a particular body of people, he is entitled to a pecuniary compenſation according to their ſeveral abilities, though he may be concerned in trade, or poſſeſs an independent fortune of his own.

As I intimated, at the beginning, it is not my deſign to be the apologiſt of either ſide, or any individual; therefore it is no concern of mine to enquire into the expediency or inexpediency of your junior paſtor's going into buſineſs; yet I cannot help obſerving, that he comes in but for a very moderate ſhare of blame, conſidering he "*ſtood firſt, both as figure and actor.*" The whole body of the people at Dock are involved in the guilt of his wicked conduct. But when I ſee, p. 12, their number to be ſeventy, I pauſe, and think within myſelf, perhaps their " number and reſpectability may always remain as ſufficient a ſanction" as thoſe referred to, (p. 33). I have therefore only to remark, that other conſiderations beſides pinching poverty may render it expedient for a miniſter to engage in buſineſs when an opportunity offers.

Though the ſurviving family of a deceaſed miniſter may be conſidered upon an equality with that of a " merchant, tradeſman, penſioner, placeman, clerk, mechanic or artiſt," yet, in a

 common

common way, they are under greater diſadvantages than the family of any one of theſe. Not only as it may fall in with their own inclination; but, were it otherwiſe, to gratify that of their people, they muſt make as genteel an appearance as the miniſter's income will poſſibly admit of. His children, in their years of childhood, are rather more ſecluded from the world than other children are; introduced into the families, and often made familiar with them who are in a ſtation of life far ſuperior to what they have any right to expect; and their education generally is ſomewhat above the loweſt order of mankind. Theſe things, though not in themſelves to be complained of, yet without correſpondent advantages, either when they go out into life, or are deprived of a father, often leave a miniſter's children the moſt uſeleſs and the moſt helpleſs members of ſociety. Of all this, I know it is eaſy to caſt the blame upon the parents. Our people, for us, like ourſelves, when young, for our parents

——————————" only wiſh,
" As duteous ſons, our fathers were more wiſe."

If ſuch facts be admitted, are they not a ſufficient inducement for a miniſter, eſpecially one who has a large and growing family, to engage in buſineſs, if circumſtances concur to offer an opportunity? I am far from thinking that a miniſter ſhould ſuffer his mind to be ſo harraſſed with the future

future evils that may poſſibly befal his family, as to determine him to be a tradeſman at all events; nor yet if he ſhould think his way clear to do ſo, that it would be right for him to take upon himſelf a ponderous weight of "payments, remittances, books, letters, invoices, orders, and other accounts," including a long *et cetera*. All buſineſſes do not require ſeveral of theſe; nor will a ſmall degree of any buſineſs require a great weight of them.

To ſay "a widow might as well go into trade upon her becoming ſuch," (p. 41.) is a ſentiment worthy of ſuch a man, and requires no other remark.

The inſtability, caprice, and turbulent tempers of a few individuals in a church, not only render the continuance of a miniſter very uncertain, but oftentimes are the means of making parties, promoting diviſions, ſpreading ſcandals, and ſometimes the complete diſperſion of a body of people, among whom the Goſpel has been preached; the conſideration of all which may render it *ſufficiently* expedient for a miniſter not to refuſe an opportunity that offers of engaging in buſineſs. If I am not much miſtaken, your junior paſtor was in ſuch a predicament, were it only on account of the ſingle individual who wrote the narrative. Such characters are the bane of our churches, and abundantly more deſtructive of their proſperity, peace, and even exiſtence, than what he invidiouſly calls "trading

" miniſters"*. How many of ſuch have been what Mr. Robinſon calls " the wolf of the flock, the ruin of the church," and how often have they " *driven* the beſt of men to give up their charge and depart?"

This very thing appears to be the principal reaſon given by a pious preacher for quitting the diſſenters, and going over to the national eſtabiſhment; and his chief objection againſt what we ſtill think the only ſcriptural order of a goſpel church. " The conſtitution of your churches," ſays he, " which you ſuppoſe the only one agreeable to the ſcripture, appears to me faulty, in giving a greater power to the people than the ſcripture authorizes.

* This writer, knowing that an odium is affixed to the character of a trading juſtice, gives the ſame epithet to thoſe miniſters who are engaged in trade, ſeemingly with a deſign to inſinuate, that the diſgrace of the former character would naturally attach itſelf to the latter, as the compound names given to both are formed by prefixing the ſame term to the title of their reſpective profeſſions, ſimply conſidered. But had he poſſeſſed a very ſmall portion of that " candour," of whoſe " generous ſpirit" he ſpeaks ſo highly, p. 18, he would have avoided names ſo ſimilar where the ground of conduct in thoſe perſons, which gave occaſion to ſuch names, is ſo eſſentially diſſimilar. The trading juſtice makes merchandiſe *of* his commiſſion. The trading miniſter makes merchandiſe *with*, but not *of* his miniſtry. It was a juſt diſtinction made by a miniſter to a people who were deſirous of his ſettling with them, when he wiſhed to know what they could do for his ſupport; he apologized to them for ſuch enquiry, by obſerving, that though he did not preach for money, yet he muſt have money for preaching; and though he did not preach for a living, yet he muſt live by preaching.

There

"There is doubtleſs a ſenſe in which miniſters are not only the ſervants of the Lord, but for his ſake, the ſervants of the churches; but it is a ſervice which implies rule, and is entitled to reſpect. Thus the Apoſtle ſays, Obey them that have the rule over you. Their office is that of a ſteward, who is neither to lord it over the houſehold, nor to be entirely under ſubjection to it, but to ſuperintend and provide for the family. Scriptural regulations are wiſely and graciouſly adapted to our ſtate of infirmity, but I think the power which the people with you claim and attempt to exerciſe is not ſo. Many of them, though truly gracious perſons, may notwithſtanding, from their ſituation in life, their want of education, and the narrowneſs of their views, be very incapable of government; yet when a number of ſuch are aſſociated according to your plan, under the honourable title of a Church of Chriſt, they acquire a great importance. Almoſt every individual conceives himſelf qualified to judge and to guide the miniſter; to ſift and ſcrutinize his expreſſions, and to tell him how and what he ought to preach. But the poorer part of your flocks are not always the moſt troubleſome. The rich can contribute moſt to the miniſter's ſupport, who is often *entirely* dependent upon his people for a maintenance; their riches likewiſe give them ſome additional weight and influence in the church; and the officers whom you call the Deacons are uſually choſen from among the more wealthy. But it is not always found that the moſt wealthy Church members

fers are the moſt eminent either for grace or wiſdom. We may be rather ſure, that riches, if the poſſeſſors are not proportionably humble and ſpiritual, have a direct tendency to nouriſh the worms of ſelf-conceit and ſelf-will. Such perſons expect to be conſulted, and that their judgment ſhall be followed.——-I can truly ſay that my heart has been grieved for the oppoſition, neglect, and unkindneſs which ſome valuable men among you have to my knowledge met with, from thoſe who ought to have eſteemed them very highly for their work ſake. The effects of this ſupreme power lodged in the people, and of the unſanctified ſpirit in which it has been exerciſed, have been often viſible in the diviſions and ſubdiviſions which have crumbled large ſocieties into ſeperate handfuls."

Could other diſſenting miniſters percieve, by what medium, without a palpable contradiction, the underſtanding connects a " ſubſcription really *ex animo*" of *unfeigned aſſent and conſent to* ALL *and* EVERY *thing contained in, and preſcribed by the book of common prayer*, with an acknowledgment that ſome things in, or preſcribed by that book, *are faulty, and want amendment:* Could the conſiſtency of theſe things be perceived, it is probable many of his quondam brethren would have been influenced, by the ſame reaſons, to have acted as this apologiſt for epiſcopal ordination has done.

The beſt of things, in the preſent ſtate, are ſubject to corruption, and liable to abuſe in proportion

portion to their excellence, as we ſee in health, riches, talents, liberty, and even the goſpel itſelf; but the *abuſe* of theſe do nothing towards the proof of their being in themſelves "faulty."

That the power given to the people by the ſcriptures, as we think, and by the conſtitution of our churches, is frequently abuſed we readily admit, but having never been *obliged* to ſubſcribe *really ex animo* to this or any other abuſes that may creep into our churches, we are always at liberty *conſiſtently* and therefore *conſcientiouſly* to uſe every mean in our power to correct what may appear to be "*faulty*," and make an "*amendment*" to what, according to ſcripture, in our view, appears to be defective.

Unpleaſing ſoever as the above repreſentation of the ſtate of our miniſters and churches may be, it muſt ſtill be admitted, that it is far from being what is univerſal. I truſt moſt of our miniſters poſſeſs true goſpel liberty, not indeed enjoyed through the neglect of ſolemn engagements formerly entered into, nor yet by being armed with the ſword of the civil magiſtrate to extort from their neighbours a part of their property; but as feeding the flock of God over which the Holy Ghoſt hath made them overſeers, inſtructing the ignorant, ſtrengthening the feeble, comforting them that mourn, encouraging the fearful, reclaiming backſliders, and thus nouriſhing them up in knowledge, faith, holineſs, brotherly love, &c. they receive in return a voluntary acknowledgment of the people to whom they miniſter according

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ing to their reſpective abilities; or, as the apoſtle expreſſes it, "reap their carnal things," and with it are eſteemed highly for their work ſake. Liberty thus enjoyed, is, we think, according to the order of the goſpel, and what ariſes, not accidentally, but from the very *conſtitution* of our churches. But to make proviſion for the univerſal enjoyment of this, and effectually to prevent its interruption, no where appears to have been deſigned by the great head of the church. In the preſent ſtate, tares will always be found among the wheat; hypocrites in the congregations of the moſt righteous; ſin in the hearts of the holieſt believers. In the church of Chriſt whilſt here, violent tempers will be united with the moſt gentle; the proud and imperious, with thoſe who are meek and lowly; diſturbers of peace and deſtroyers of order, with them that follow after peace, and the things whereby they may edify one another. If, of theſe things, the good prevail over the evil, the remains of which are in the beſt of the people of God, the ſuppreſſion of ſuch evil things is a benefit derived from the conſtitution of our churches. Yet, that evil ſhould always be kept under, or that good ſhould uniformly prevail in them, neither the analogy of things, nor the peculiar bleſſings of the goſpel give us any ground to expect. A company of people united together, by no bonds of obligation of a political nature, not by ties of conſanguinity, nor of perſonal predilection for each other as born upon the ſame ſpot, diſſimilar in their circumſtances, education, habits, and particular

ticular prepoſſeſſions; in every reſpect far from a ſtate of perfection, and therefore far from an exact likeneſs to each other; having different views of the ſame ſubject, liable to miſunderſtanding among themſelves, and their tempers at beſt ſanctified but in part, may we not rather expect among them *occaſional* riſings of anger, debates, quarrels, and their uſual concomitants, eſpecially when the church has reſt from all her enemies round about, and feels nothing from the rod of perſecution? Every condition has its peculiar temptations. The perſecution of the church brings with it the temptation to apoſtatize from the truth and make ſhipwreck of the faith; yet as affliction to an individual may, on the whole, be of ſervice to him in a moral view, though not even on that account to be deſired by him, ſo perſecution, or any common calamity that befalls the church, may be the means of preventing the riſe and growth of many things, that interrupt the harmony, and deſtroy the happineſs ſubſiſting between the paſtor and his people. Diſturbed by no common enemy from without, individuals are at leiſure to contemplate the dignity of their own independent characters; and often grow extremely tenacious of their rights and liberty. Diotrephes, the writer of the narrative, appears to be much of this caſt. He is "unſpeakably happy in the enjoyment of his liberty, and ever jealous over it." He has his liberty, and a very *illiberal* uſe he has made of it. Yet, though I feel an honeſt indignation againſt the *wanton abuſe* of ſuch a bleſſing, I have not the remoteſt wiſh of poſſeſſing a power to abridge him

of that, which itſelf, he receives from God, as the God of nature and the author of the goſpel; for, I again repeat it, the *abuſe* of a thing does nothing towards the proof of its being in itſelf faulty. A miniſter, according to the plan of the goſpel, connected with a people, among whom ſuch imperfections are found, has not only to endure "oppoſition, neglect and unkindneſs from ſome of thoſe who ought to eſteem him very highly for his work's ſake," on account of an immediate miſunderſtanding between him and them, or inadvertence in himſelf; but can ſcarcely keep perfectly free from all concern, in any diſpute or ſtrife that may happen between any two of his people. Each thinks himſelf right. Both the one and the other expects his miniſter to hear what he has to ſay upon the ſubject, and ſuppoſes he muſt ſee it as he ſees it himſelf. If the miniſter think it a matter of no great importance, and that he is not called to interfere, they will both think he ſides with the oppoſite party, and have equally unkind thoughts of him; but if he diſcover a diſapprobation of the conduct of one rather than the other, it is much if he be not cenſured as acting with known partiality, and perhaps of being guilty of *great ingratitude*, for, as already obſerved, it is to be feared there are too many, who, becauſe their contribution to the miniſter, for his ſervice, is voluntary, conſider it as a matter of pure charity, and not merely what is equitable, and required upon the principles of common honeſty. In ſuch a caſe, a miniſter ſtands in a diſagreeable predicament, for as the above writer obſerves, "although a faithful miniſter, in his better hours, diſdains the

though

thought of complying with the caprice of his hearers, or conniving at their faults; yet human nature is weak, and it muſt be allowed, that, in ſuch circumſtances, he ſtands in a ſtate of temptation. And if he has grace to maintain his integrity, yet it is painful and difficult to be obliged frequently to diſpleaſe thoſe on whom we depend; and who, in other reſpects, may be our beſt friends and benefactors."

From what has been ſaid, it is not to be concluded, that diſſenting miniſters are conſtantly involved in ſuch difficulties; nor yet that, in order to ſecure himſelf from them, a miniſter ſhould anxiouſly turn his attention to trade and commerce. To a prudent man, many things will offer themſelves for conſideration before he embarks in the affairs of this life; and which, if he think he is called in providence to do, it will be poſſible for him to do it, from other motives than thoſe ſuggeſted by the evil genius of our narrator, p. 22, 41. The apoſtle Paul poſſeſſed a laudable ambition of being able to boaſt that he was not burdenſome to the church at Corinth; and may not the circumſtances of many miniſters now, occaſion them, from motives that are praiſe-worthy to aim at not being *wholly* dependent upon their churches? I know they may, and ſuch as will eaſily ſuggeſt themſelves to a candid mind, acquainted with human nature and the preſent ſtate of religion among the Diſſenters. A faithful miniſter of the goſpel will be concerned to approve himſelf to Chriſt as his maſter, and to every man's conſcience in the ſight of God. Without "being

deſirous

deſirous of graſping large poſſeſſions," he will make it manifeſt that he does *not* attempt "to ſerve two maſters," but endeavour to make buſineſs, property, recreation, &c. ſubſervient to the great end to which his life *ought* to be devoted. Nor to ſuch an one will *duty* be the only incentive to ſuch a mode of conduct, but *inclination* alſo will have conſiderable influence. Acquainted in ſome meaſure with books, and having acquired a habit of ſtudy, it will be with reluctance he will ſpend any conſiderable portion of time in employments of another nature.

Our author profeſſes to "know too well with what influence and weight trade continually preſſes on the mind." He may know it, but he does not know the painful anxieties that ſuch men as he often cauſe to their miniſters. He appears from the narrative, to be too much like one whom I have heard of, who, when he had himſelf contributed towards an open rupture in the church, ſeemed to be much hurt becauſe the miniſter did not appear to be more diſtreſſed and caſt down in his mind.

Should he hereafter "aſpire to be an author," and venture again to "appear at the bar of the public," I would adviſe him not

"To lengthen out his page with ſlander,
"Nor, through the world, for ſcandal wander."

I remain in haſte,

LONDON,
July 7, 1790.

Yours, &c.

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